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Another Case of Injury to the Human Eye by the Walking Stick, Anisomorpha (Phasmidae)

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On the evening of Sunday, 18 August, 1946, I was rambling around in the woods at the Galveston County Fair Grounds near League City, Texas. A small bayou was nearby, and the lowlands here had a grove of large trees, mostly oak, and a rather heavy undergrowth of vines, weeds, etc.

When my two friends and I chanced upon the decaying stump of a tree lying in the undergrowth, curiosity dictated that I turn it over to see what was underneath. I noted a spider or two, and then my attention was attracted by a large grey-brown insect about three or four inches long sitting quietly on the under surface of the overturned stump. Closer observation revealed it to be not one insect but a pair in copulation.

The female was large and fat compared to the male, who was only about two-thirds as long as she was, and much thinner. He was on her back, with the caudal end of his abdomen curled down on the right side of her abdomen, the tip fastened to her genital pore on the ventral side.

When I touched the insects, the female started moving around rapidly, but the male seemed content just to sit and ride, only occasionally moving a leg or an antenna. After a moment the female stopped moving. On both insects I noted a tiny knob or protuberance on the dorsolateral surface of the prothorax, on the extreme anterior portion, but paid no particular attention to these structures at the time. I touched the insects again, and the female ran around for a moment and again stopped, sitting quietly with the male on her back.

I became more and more aware of a strong odor in the air, not pleasant, but not extremly unpleasant. In my opinion, it more nearly resembled the odor of the musk glands of the common garter snake than anything else I could think of. To make sure the odor was produced by the insects, I put my face down close to them to sniff. When it was still eight or ten inches away from the insects, however, I felt several tiny droplets of fluid strike me in the face, not all at once but in quick succession. I did not see the droplets at all, only felt them as they touched me. One or more struck me in the left eye, and in about four seconds I began to experience a severe burning sensation in that eye, with lacrimation. Blepharospasm became so pronounced that I could not keep the eye open. By great effort I could open it a little, but the muscle spasm was so severe that it closed the eyelids again almost immediately.

These reactions continued for some twenty minutes and then the burning pain, lacrimation and blepharospasm began to decrease in severity. The conjunctiva of the affected eye had become quite hyperemic by this time, but I could hold the eye open for short intervals now. I examined the insects again—not getting my face too close to them, however in an attempt to discover the source of ejection of the droplets. The only possibility seemed to be the tiny projections before mentioned, so we looked at them closely and touched them with a twig. They appeared wet, and bubbled very slightly when we touched them. We saw no droplets fly out, but noted that a rather thick, tenacious white material on them seemed to increase in amount at times, as though more were being secreted. When all this was wiped off, the protuberance appeared to have a tiny depression in the center, as though leading down into a duct. These protuberances were about alike in the male and female, except that they were larger and more prominent in the female. I concluded that they were the source of the toxic substance that had gotten into my eye.

I carried the insects in a paper cup until I found an empty whiskey bottle beside the road, to which bottle they were then transferred, still in copulation. My eye felt much better and,

about forty minutes after first receiving the droplets in my eye, I reached some water and washed it out with plain water. By that time only a little burning sensation remained though hyperemia was still marked. I did not notice any reaction from the few droplets that struck the face in places other than the eye. By the next morning the conjunctiva was only very slightly hyperemic. All symptoms had completely subsided.

I took the insects to my good friend, Professor R. W. Strandtmann of the University of Texas School of Medicine in Galveston. We kept them several days without knowing what to feed them. When bananas were tried, the female seemed to eat some, but the insects did not look too happy, even though they were still in coitus and had been ever since I had found them. After three days the male died and after four days the female died, still in copulation.

The insects were subsequently identified by Dr. A. B. Gurney of the U. S. National Museum as *Anisomorpha ferruginea* (Beauv.). He added that this species is very similar to *A. buprestoides* (Stoll) and may eventually prove to be the same as that species.

The injury to the eye, though painful, was much less severe and of much shorter duration than the case reported by Stewart [1] who gave an account of a similar incident in which vision was impaired for about five days.

Epiperipatus braziliensis (Bouvier) on Barro Colorado Island, Canal Zone

By Ross H. Arnett, Jr., Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

The interesting note regarding the habitat of *Peripatus* published by Prof. W. A. Hilton (1) brought to mind observations made by Mr. K. E. Frick and the author in late November 1944 on Barro Colorado Island, C. Z.

[1] Stewart, M. A. Phasmid injury to the human eye. Can. Ent. 69: 84–86, 1937.